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Toni Giró, art and the obsolescence of everything

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Currently, two exhibitions by Toni Giró, an artist difficult to see, coincide in time, which make us think of the obsolescence of all things, of what expires, what disappears, what is forgotten.

Toni Giró. The absolute obsolete

Can Manyé and Creation Space. Alella.

Until 18 December.

Toni Giró. Revelations 2013-2019

El quadern robat Gallery. Barcelona.

Until January 28, 2023

In the Can Manyé Art and Creation Space, in Alella, we can see a splendid collection of pieces that form a kind of installation at the same time. The exhibition, in the words of the author himself, deals with the passage of time, with the expiration of what we believe to be immovable.

Just upon entering, in a corner, we find a shelf of *Silent Volumes*. It is a kind of corner library, a display of minimalist sculptures, a shelf of objects, where rather small pieces are exhibited, cylindrical shapes or sections of cylinders of different widths and different heights. They are compact, opaque pieces, made of concrete in gray and brown tones, which turn the empty interior spaces and the separations between pages of books that are not there into solid volumes.

Image of the bookshelf with the *silent Volumes*

When we enter the central space we find ourselves before a splendid installation of pieces scattered on the floor in an orderly manner. The sizes and placement of *Bibliogeometry* (36 pieces in total, 6 on each side and row), which form a kind of large square and spread out at our feet, evoke echoes of the horizontal sculptures of minimalist artists such as Carl André.

But, when we get closer, we see that, in this case, the "mute volumes" are combined with half-open real books and have the shape of the different spaces that remain between the covers or between the pages, so that one and the other they fit, tongue and groove and complete to form a small compact sculpture.

The real books that are part of these three-dimensional works are obsolete volumes, which the artist has found thrown away or abandoned, which make us think of all the information and knowledge that we put aside, that we underestimate, that we reject. How many technical and professional manuals do we find thrown away, how many texts on "new technologies" that have quickly ceased to be so, how many textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, art histories, how many novels that have gone out of style, how much poetry has been abandoned.

General view of the 36 pieces of *Bibliogeometry*

Confronted with this *Bibliogeometry* and occupying an entire wall, the author has arranged a selection of 30 drawings from the *Naturalismes* series. In this case, it is about colored drawings on paper made with everyday, poor and simple materials, such as ash, graphite, ink, iodine, or with the participation of natural elements such as dust, sunlight or humidity.

The value of the textures and effects produced by the work processes, by the passage of time, are the main protagonists of these drawings. Among the objects and subjects represented, apart from the proliferation of abstract textures of great quality and beauty, the vegetable elements (flowers, leaves, thistles), the animals (bones, skulls, snails, the spider in the study) and other images or memories with a more symbolic or connotative aspect such as a bust of Poseidon or a snail trap.

The dialogue between the sculptures and the drawings becomes a way of encompassing the most diverse memories, of becoming aware of the time that passes, from different forms of expression and points of view.

Other diverse works also orbit around these two series but share the same underlying concerns. Crawling along the ground we find a curious elongated piece, which may remind us of a centipede, made up of very different pieces of welded iron souls that thread together stones covered with moss. Writing suggests both a fragmented writing and a musical score, and the appearance of the moss once again brings the constant reference to the passage of time, to parasitic colonization, to the continuous intervention of natural elements in any vital process.

View of the *Scriptural*

Some three-dimensional pieces on the wall or placed on the floor revolve around the concept and the idea that sculpture is a hole. Others, like *El coll al peu*, play at inverting set phrases in search of new meanings and diverse connotations, transgressing what is conventional and established. On a small shelf on the wall is *Obsolet absolut*, an artist's book that gives its name to the entire exhibition. In this case, it is about the appropriation and manipulation of images from a found book, a "Natural History of Creation", to which the author adds overprinted texts that open up new meanings or seeks other visual continuities between images that carry to new readings.

Almost in parallel, the El quadern robat Gallery, in Barcelona, and its *alma mater* Anna Belsa, have had the success of bringing together a series of works, almost all unpublished, made between 2013 and 2019. They are *chiaroscuro* drawings that the artist made with dust graphite, working with his hands, with rags and with erasers.

The theme and main role of this series of intense and dark drawings are cars on fire, one of the paradigmatic images of all kinds of accidents, riots and protests. They are images that affect the typical attraction-repulsion that things that burn, fire, objects on fire cause us. The areas of the drawing where the fire appears are achieved by erasing and disappearing the blackness of the graphite, illuminating the darkness and revealing the color of the base paper. In this way, Giró, like the Baroque painters, seeks to reveal the image, to make it come to life, to make it visible from the darkness. Perhaps that is why he titles this series *Revelations*.

One of the drawings exhibited at the El quadern robat Gallery

Despite the distant memory of crashed cars, such as those in the *Five Deaths* (1963) photograph series by Andy Warhol, these images of Giró, drawn by hand and with a traditional technique, make us think more of more everyday social problems, in small violent outbursts of protest in the face of great institutional and institutionalized violence, in desperate responses to abuses of power and injustices of all kinds.

It is evident, as the artist himself recalls, that we live immersed in permanent obsolescence, stunned and bewildered by the accelerated present, the uncertainty of the future and the nostalgia for the past. His sculptures and drawings aim to reveal the magnitude of this drama and remember everything that disappears, that expires, that is forgotten. A whole plea against forgetfulness and planned obsolescence.

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Abel Figueres

Bachelor of Fine Arts (specialties in sculpture and engraving). He has been a professor of Secondary Education and a professor of the Bachelor of Arts Plastics, Image and Design from 1977 to 2016. He has dedicated himself to teaching art, drawing and / or design in various places and at different levels. Interested in the relationships between art and design theory, practice, education and criticism, he has published numerous articles and texts in newspapers, magazines and catalogues.

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